

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMISSION minutes
7:00pm THURSDAY 08 OCTOBER 2020

* VIRTUAL MEETING *

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 19:02

X	David Martin, Chair	X	Julie Onos (associate)
X	Diane Randolph, Vice Chair	X	Sunanda Pepalla
X	Nathan Cookson	X	Leela Ramachandran
X	Sandra Hinds	X	Odeviz Soto
X	Simon Lee (associate)	X	Dawn Wang
X	Nassra Mgeni	X	Charmaine Williams
X	Makena Muindi		

I. Regular Business

1. Notes from the chair

- i. Select board looking into fair housing study. May join consortium of towns. Does commission have interest in hearing more about fair housing? Could ask Liz to present to us.
 1. Question applicability to this commission.
 - a. Yes, we can recommend several options for approaching this initiative
 - b. Yes, inclusivity, fits charge. Perfect
 - c. No, isn't there a housing department?
 - i. ACHC – town committee, volunteers
 - d. As it relates to DEI, this is important. Also, health, child care, representation in hiring – lots of large areas in here could benefit. Concern is that these areas are very large. Question if we have time for a goal like this. May be too much if we want to tackle other things this year.
 - ii. Select board recommended school committee keep current colonial mascot
 1. School committee open for ~1 month around mascot issue
 2. No time for us to come up with statement as committee but could send recommendations personally
 3. Some groups not impacted by mascot
 4. Select board might have standing, but school should make decision
 5. Does this decision from select board make us rethink our decision around housing?
 - iii. Two statements on structural racism presented to select board
 1. Very different styles

2. One was list of things to address, other was from town of Boxborough

II. Special business

1. Welcome new members
 - i. Welcome to Simon and Julie
 - ii. They will vote as substitute members if full member is absent
2. Community conversation for members of under-represented groups to express their first-hand experiences in Acton to DEIC
 - i. 45 minutes given to community conversation
 - ii. Simon shared his move from North Carolina. Big difference between deep south/red state compared to Acton. He's had fairly good experiences here compared to the south, although still room for improvement. Biggest difference is neighbors came over to say hello after first day. He's feeling quite okay here.
 - iii. Sandra suggests keeping community conversation open in case people jump on later. Time will be given at the end of meeting.
 - iv. Commission will host another community conversation in the future
 - v. Offered more time at end of meeting (21:20) – no hands
3. Vote on officers
 - i. Vice chair – Diane
 1. No other nominations
 2. Unanimous
 - ii. Clerk – Nate
 1. No other nominations
 2. Unanimous
4. Define of terms to be used by the Commission, e.g. diversity, equity, inclusion, etc
 - i. Makena created a draft of definitions – presented to commission

Diversity: Reflecting a range of backgrounds, including but not limited to, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, socio-economic status, race, nationality, ability/disability, and other ideologies.

Inclusion (Action-oriented): Not only accepting but actively inviting people to a group or collective, explicit to background and making sure individuals feel accepted and supported.

Equity: Creating systems proportional to citizens' needs in order to lift up all members of the town to an equal level. Rests on the basis of being fair and impartial to all groups.

1. Equity is exactly right – proportional based on needs
2. Equity is not equal/equality since not all needs are equal
3. Inclusion – don't say regardless of – say because of – actively invite instead of disregarding background
4. Collective implies output – other terms?
5. Motion to adopt by Sandra, second by Diane

6. Vote: Unanimously adopted
5. Develop a Mission Statement for the DEIC
 - i. Leela created draft
 - ii. Mission Statement

Mission Statement: The Town of Acton has established and charged the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission with assessing the state of diversity and inclusion in Acton. Our aim is to dismantle structural and cultural barriers, and offer recommendations to improve equity and empower underrepresented groups, especially racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

1. First one frames DEI using protected class categories – unbiased. Second one sounds like local effort. Second sounds more concise'
2. Mission statement usually include a "how". SECOND statement sounds more like vision since that's "what."
3. Mission might be more inclusive if we say "all community members"
4. First is detailed – second may be open to ambiguity or misunderstanding
5. One is comprehensive, spells out specific groups
6. Concern about comprehensive list in number 1. We already have commission on disability/aging/veterans services. Our charge is for racial/ethnic/religious under-represented groups.
7. One panelist suggested mission statement should reflect present state and vision is future. Another described it as the what and the how
8. Question on how racial, ethnic, religious groups are defined
 - a. Groups that may not have had participation of other groups (underrepresented)
 - b. About 25% residents are of Asian descent, 2% African American – but we didn't have that level in our committees/boards.
 - c. Underrepresented but not necessarily minority (since black/brown people are national majority)
9. Motion to adopt by Leela. Second by Charmaine.
10. Vote: Unanimously adopted.

iii. Vision Statement

Vision Statement: The Acton Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission envisions an equitable and anti-racist community where all residents and employees can thrive, free of racism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, and all other systems of oppression. Everyone will have

equitable access to opportunities and resources, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, disability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, national origin, gender identity, religious affiliation, or the intersection of these identities.

1. Focus on charge? Racial/ethnic/religious?
2. One panelist likes the list of groups in vision since it can be broader, whereas mission should focus on the work we're doing
3. 2nd is smoother reading
4. Second one has good point about *antiracist* – active and focuses on charge
5. Should include/move some verbs (dismantle, provide) in the mission statement. Vision should be a quick pitch.
6. Nate motions to adopt. Dawn seconds.
7. Vote: Unanimously adopted.
8. Suggestion to keep in mind that we're all residents/employees – is town leadership part of the employee group? Elected are all residents. Employees can be either. Town leadership should be represented.

6. Develop a Statement on Systemic Racism for the Select Board to consider
 - i. Select board didn't adopt either statement. Gave us task of creating statement for them. We will address this next meeting.
7. Discuss anonymous input to the Commission through members
 - i. Some community members may be concerned about making experiences known publicly. Commissioners might be approached individually in lieu of public comment. Commissioners will make note of the conversation and bring it to meetings anonymously
 - ii. Vote? All thumbs up?
8. Discuss possible logistics and development of a questionnaire to assess experiences of under-represented racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Acton
 - i. Town has DEI working group (employees) that recommended we use constant contact. Town manager says we also have survey monkey license.
 - ii. Good option for community involvement IN ADDITION to discussion at meetings – should also give people more time.
 - iii. Maybe leave survey open and take snapshots at certain times.
 - iv. Two types of work:
 1. Developing survey
 2. Who to reach out to with questions (town website, social media, other outreach?)
 - v. Question about multiple languages. Interpreter would be better than depending on something like google translate. We do have people who speak different languages.

1. Suggestion to request money for interpreters/translator
- vi. Suggestion for commission to do some homework

III. Closing Items

1. Approve minutes from previous meeting
 - i. Leela moves to approve. Second by Diane.
 - ii. Vote: unanimously approved
2. Future meetings and calendar events
 - i. Tuesday 10/13
 1. next week to get recommendation in to school committee. Could also discuss agenda item we missed (systemic racism statement) and survey design.
 2. Next meeting should focus on goals as well
 3. Sunanda is working on goals, might have some sort of draft by Tuesday – was waiting for vision/mission/definitions
 - ii. Thursday 11/12
 - iii. Thursday 12/10
3. Adjourn
 - i. Motion by Leela. Second by Sandra.
 - ii. Vote: unanimously adjourned.

TIME ADJOURNED: 21:35